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Sent: 6/25/2018 9:42:26 AM
To: Beck, Nancy [Beck.Nancy@epa.gov]
Subject: Morning Energy, presented by ExxonMobil: EPA hits the PFAS track — Rick Perry's very busy week — Another Pruitt probe

By Kelsey Tamborrino | 06/25/2018 05:40 AM EDT

EPA HITS THE PFAS TRACK: Administrator Scott Pruitt promised he would address cancer-causing pollutants during a controversial "leadership summit" last month on toxic nonstick chemicals, called PFAS — and New England residents are looking for Pruitt to make good on that promise today. Pro's Annie Snider reports that the first public meeting on the issue takes place today in New Hampshire and will be a test for EPA to win back the public's trust. EPA has faced backlash since POLITICO reported top Trump administration officials sought to block an HHS report that found some PFAS chemicals can pose a danger at one-tenth of the level EPA set as the safety threshold.

That report was ultimately made public last week, but that doesn't mean residents won't be angry and frustrated today at the meeting on PFAS chemicals in a state where contamination from the chemicals has affected thousands of people and has emerged as a critical issue on the campaign trail, Annie reports.

New Hampshire residents say their state's situation — grappling with a wide range of problems from the chemical — is a testament to the need for strong federal leadership, Annie reports. Political officials in Washington have proven to be fickle partners for the communities, especially following the resignation of Albert "Kell" Kelly. Advocates say they've found a reliable partner in EPA Regional Administrator Alexandra Dunn, but they caution whether it'll be enough. "At the end of the day, this isn't about industry ... this is about helping communities that have to live with these high levels in their bodies and have to drink contaminated water for a very long time," said Andrea Amico of the New Hampshire group Testing for Pease. Read the story.

MONDAY, MONDAY, MONDAY! I'm your host Kelsey Tamborrino. Andeavor's Stephen Brown knew that the first Congress voted in 1789 to pay themselves \$6 per day. For today: Which U.S. state has the most miles of rivers? Send your tips, energy gossip and comments to ktamborrino@politico.com, or follow us on Twitter [@kelseytam](https://twitter.com/kelseytam), [@Morning_Energy](https://twitter.com/Morning_Energy) and [@POLITICOPro](https://twitter.com/POLITICOPro).

IN THE SENATE HOMESTRETCH: The Senate will wrap up consideration this afternoon of the so-called minibus H.R. 5895 (115), a roundup of three 2019 appropriations bills including the Energy-Water measure. At 5:30 p.m., the chamber will hold a roll call vote on passage of the bill, followed by a cloture vote on the motion to proceed to the farm bill, H.R. 2 (115).

RICK PERRY'S BUSY WEEK: Energy Secretary Rick Perry will deliver the keynote address at this week's World Gas Conference, a week-log confab in D.C. that brings together thousands of natural gas industry representatives. But that's not the only thing on the Energy secretary's agenda; He'll also meet Tuesday with Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak, Pro's Darius Dixon and Ben Lefebvre report. Details on what Perry and Novak will discuss weren't disclosed, but the meeting comes just days after Russia joined with OPEC to raise oil exports. Perry is scheduled to deliver the keynote address the same day he meets with Novak.

For today only: Perry will meet with Israeli Energy Minister Yuval Steinitz today at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, where the pair will sign an implementation agreement to establish the U.S.-Israel Chamber of Excellence in Energy, Engineering and Water Technology. The signing comes after Congress appropriated \$4 million in March to establish the center for joint research and development with Israel. The sum will be

matched by the Israeli government and private sector partners, DOE said, for a total targeted initial sum of \$16 million. Perry will also host the European Union and members of the Three Seas Initiative for a meeting at DOE headquarters today to discuss Transatlantic cooperation on energy security.

— **Coinciding with this week's gas conference**, representatives from a host of energy companies will announce the launch of the new Global Natural Gas Coalition at the National Press Club this morning. See the [agenda](#).

ANOTHER PRUITT PROBE: Pruitt is facing yet another investigation into his handling of his agency, this time by the U.S. Office of Special Counsel, Pro's Emily Holden reports. Three sources familiar with the process say the OSC is reviewing claims that Pruitt retaliated against a handful of employees who pushed back against his spending and management. At least six current and former agency officials were reportedly fired or reassigned to new jobs, allegedly for questioning Pruitt's security detail, among other issues. OSC is in the process of interviewing some of those employees, Emily [reports](#).

MORE PRUITT CONDO DEAL FALLOUT: Newly released emails show Pruitt discussed hiring a friend of the Hart's, the family who rented him the condo on Capitol Hill for a modest \$50 per-night, The New York Times reports. The new details emerged from previously undisclosed communications released under a FOIA request from the Sierra Club. The emails show a discussion about potentially hiring Hart's family friend between Pruitt's chief of staff Ryan Jackson and Hart, who was chairman of the lobbying firm Williams & Jensen at the time. Other subjects discussed in the new emails during and after Pruitt rented the condo included refrigerant chemicals and the Paris climate agreement, the Times reports. Read [more](#).

NOMINEES ON TAP: The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee will take up a slate of nominations Tuesday, setting the chamber up to move forward on four of the five nominees to DOE [currently awaiting](#) confirmation. The committee will hear from Teri Donaldson to be inspector general of the department; Christopher Fall to be director of the Office of Science; Karen Evans to be an assistant secretary of Energy for cybersecurity, energy security and emergency response; and Daniel Simmons to be an assistant secretary of Energy for energy efficiency and renewable energy.

FOR YOUR RADAR: The House Natural Resources Committee this week will hold a [legislative hearing](#) on three bipartisan offshore wind energy proposals, Pro's Anthony Adragna reports. One of the proposals would require Interior to develop a regular offshore wind leasing plan or schedule and require the agency and the Defense Department update a 1983 memorandum of understanding concerning their operations on the Outer Continental Shelf. Read the [discussion draft](#).

CLIMATE CAUCUS CLIMBS TO 84: The Climate Solutions Caucus brought its total up to 84 members last week, welcoming six new members, four of whom were reported in last week's ME. The bipartisan House caucus also added Kentucky Republican Rep. [Brett Guthrie](#) and Democratic Rep. [John Yarmuth](#).

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TRUMP GOES AFTER ROSEN: President Donald Trump [appeared](#) in Las Vegas this weekend, where he tried to give a boost to vulnerable Sen. [Dean Heller](#) in his race for re-election. Trump dubbed his opponent, Rep. [Jacky Rosen](#), "Wacky Jacky," telling the crowd "you don't want her as your senator," while at Nevada Republicans' state convention. "Now, that name didn't come from me," Trump said.

"That's a name that people have known because people that know her, that's what they call her, Wacky Jacky, that's what you want for your senator?" The president's boost of support for Heller comes amid what is expected to be one of the closest 2018 Senate races, with Democrats placing their biggest target on Heller. The

Yucca Mountain nuclear waste repository in the state has played a particular role in the race, with both candidates opposing its revival.

EPA'S COIN COLLECTION: EPA has awarded a more-than-\$8,500 contract to The Lapel Pins Plus Network LLC for "response award development - Challenge Coin," CNN [reports](#) via records obtained by Democratic super PAC American Bridge. The contract stipulates the company must design a two-inch color 3D "coin award" that will display EPA's Emergency Response program logo on the inner circle and "HURRICANES HARVEY, IRMA AND MARIA - THE CALIFORNIA WILDFIRES" on the outer circle, CNN writes. The back of the coin should "convey the sentiment that EPA staff from all across the country worked together to respond to the incidents from Puerto Rico to California (and regions in between)," the contract says.

MAIL CALL! Four Republican lawmakers wrote to EPA Inspector General Arthur Elkins last week, asking him to look into whether a major original equipment manufacturer lobbied the agency in 2016 to secure prohibition of glider trucks in the agency's Phase 2 heavy-duty truck rule. The lawmakers, led by Florida Rep. [Bill Posey](#), ask Elkins to investigate the matter, as well as look into whether such communication was deleted. Read the letter [here](#).

HEITKAMP AD HIGHLIGHTS ENERGY EFFORTS: North Dakota Sen. [Heidi Heitkamp](#) released a new statewide ad Friday highlighting her record as an "effective" senator, Campaign Pro's James Arkin [reports](#). Heitkamp "passed drought relief, ended the 40-year oil export ban, rolled back EPA wetland rules, cut regulations on rural lending, protected our long range strike bombers, passed the border security act and shut down human trafficking websites," the ad's narrator says. Heitkamp's campaign is backing the ad with a six figure statewide TV buy, and a five-figure digital buy. Watch it [here](#).

REPORT TOUTS CARBON TAX BENEFITS: A new report from the Information Technology and Innovation Foundation found a carbon tax would lead to innovation in less carbon-intensive, clean technology, and would lower the economic strain of reducing emissions. The report also found that using revenues from a carbon tax to lower the after-tax cost of research and capital investment would reduce any negative effects on GDP. Read the report [here](#).

THE MACROECONOMIC IMPACT: Colorado's recent move to join states in adopting low emissions standards for vehicles similar to California could lead to "small but positive long-term macroeconomic impacts" in the state, according to a new analysis from the clean energy business advocates at E2. The analysis estimated the move would result in annual increases of about \$72 million in GDP and in an additional 1,700 jobs. Read it [here](#).

MOVER, SHAKER: Senate Energy Chairman [Lisa Murkowski](#) [announced](#) last week that Michelle Toohey joined the committee staff as a staff writer and adviser for the communications team. Toohey previously worked as a public affairs consultant in Alaska.

QUICK HITS

- Democrats want U.S. Interior Department staff moves explained, [Associated Press](#).
- Trump administration tightens rules for federal scientists talking to reporters, [Los Angeles Times](#).
- Big Oil eyes U.S. minority groups to build offshore drilling support, [Reuters](#).
- Pruitt shuns email for external communications, [CNN](#).
- A leading climate agency may lose its climate focus, [The New York Times](#).

— A red state goes green: How Texas became a pioneer in wind energy, [CBS News](#).

HAPPENING THIS WEEK

MONDAY

9:00 a.m. — The Institute for Defense and Government Advancement [conference](#) on "Directed Energy Systems," Alexandria, Va.

9:00 a.m. — The Atlantic Council Global Energy Center [discussion](#) on "Toward 21st Century Energy Systems in Central & Eastern Europe," 1030 15th Street NW

9:00 a.m. — American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy holds [2018 International Symposium on Energy Efficiency](#), 529 14th Street NW

9:00 a.m. — The Business Council for International Understanding [discussion](#) with Azerbaijan Minister of Energy Parviz Shahbazov.

12:00 p.m. — EDF and Exxon Mobil hold "The Methane Moment" panel discussion, 801 Mt Vernon Place NW

1:00 p.m. — U.S. Chamber of Commerce holds U.S.-Israel Energy Center launch event, 1615 H Street NW

2:00 p.m. — The Cross-Brookings Initiative on Energy & Climate [discussion](#) on "The new dynamics of global energy: A conversation with IEA Executive Director Fatih Birol," 1775 Massachusetts Ave NW

3:00 p.m. — The Business Council for International Understanding [discussion](#) with Indonesian Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources Ignasius Jonan

TUESDAY

8:00 a.m. — HydroVision International [conference](#), Charlotte, N.C.

8:30 a.m. — The International Gas Union holds its [World Gas Conference](#), 801 Mount Vernon Place NW

9:00 a.m. — The Center for Strategic and International Studies [conversation](#) with Pratima Rangarajan, CEO of Oil and Gas Climate Initiative Climate Investments, 1616 Rhode Island Ave NW

9:00 a.m. — The American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy holds its [International Symposium on Energy Efficiency](#), 14th and F Streets NW

10:00 a.m. — Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee [hearing](#) on the nominations to the DOE, 366 Dirksen

10:00 a.m. — House Natural Resources Committee [hearing](#) on offshore renewable energy options, 1324 Longworth

10:30 a.m. — House Science Research and Energy Subcommittees [hearing](#) on "Artificial Intelligence - With Great Power Comes Great Responsibility," 2318 Rayburn

12:00 p.m. — George Washington's Mount Vernon news conference on new campaign to oppose the construction of a natural gas compressor station across the Potomac River from Mount Vernon, Alexandria, Va.

1:00 p.m. — House Energy and Commerce Energy Subcommittee hearing on "The Shifting Geopolitics of Oil and Gas," 2123 Rayburn

2:00 p.m. — House Oversight Interior, Energy and Environment Subcommittee hearing on "Access to Public Lands: The Effects of Forest Service Road Closures," 2154 Rayburn

2:00 p.m. — The Center for Strategic and International Studies Banyan Tree Leadership Forum with Indonesian Minister for Energy and Mineral Resources Ignasius Jonan, 1616 Rhode Island Avenue NW

3:00 p.m. — The Atlantic Council Global Energy Center discussion on "Iran's Environmental Challenges," 1030 15th Street NW

WEDNESDAY

7:50 a.m. — POLITICO Playbook Breakfast interview with Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, 1011 Fourth Street NW

10:00 a.m. — House Oversight Committee hearing on "Examining the Administration's Government-wide Reorganization Plan," 2154 Rayburn

10:15 a.m. — House Natural Resources Committee markup on various bills, 1324 Longworth

12:00 p.m. — Information Technology & Innovation Foundation discussion on "New Ideas for Strengthening Partnerships at DOE National Labs," 2325 Rayburn

12:00 p.m. — The American Foreign Policy Council discussion on "Russian Revanchism and Nord Stream II," 902 Hart

THURSDAY

9:00 a.m. — The Inter-American Dialogue discussion on "Energy Policy in Brazil: What's Next for Upstream, Refining and LNG?" 1155 15th St NW

10:00 a.m. — United States Energy Association discussion on fossil energy in a sustainable energy future, 1300 Pennsylvania Ave NW

1:15 p.m. — Icons of Infrastructure discussion on advancing the electrical grid, 529 14th St NW

4:00 p.m. — USAID Adaptation Community meeting on "Managing for climate risk," 1717 H St NW

6:00 p.m. — The Competitive Enterprise Institute's annual dinner and reception, 901 Massachusetts Ave NW

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<https://subscriber.politicopro.com/newsletters/morning-energy/2018/06/epa-hits-the-pfas-track-262992>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

White House, EPA headed off chemical pollution study [Back](#)

By Annie Snider | 05/14/2018 12:43 PM EDT

Scott Pruitt's EPA and the White House sought to block publication of a federal health study on a nationwide water-contamination crisis, after one Trump administration aide warned it would cause a "public relations nightmare," newly disclosed emails reveal.

The intervention early this year — not previously disclosed — came as HHS' Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry was preparing to publish its assessment of a class of toxic chemicals that has contaminated water supplies near military bases, chemical plants and other sites from New York to Michigan to West Virginia.

The study would show that the chemicals endanger human health at a far lower level than EPA has previously called safe, according to the emails.

"The public, media, and Congressional reaction to these numbers is going to be huge," one unidentified White House aide said in an email forwarded on Jan. 30 by James Herz, a political appointee who oversees environmental issues at the OMB. The email added: "The impact to EPA and [the Defense Department] is going to be extremely painful. We (DoD and EPA) cannot seem to get ATSDR to realize the potential public relations nightmare this is going to be."

More than three months later, the draft study remains unpublished, and the HHS unit says it has no scheduled date to release it for public comment. Critics say the delay shows the Trump administration is placing politics ahead of an urgent public health concern — something they had feared would happen after agency leaders like Pruitt started placing industry advocates in charge of issues like chemical safety.

Sen. Maggie Hassan (D-N.H.) called the delay "deeply troubling" on Monday, urging Pruitt and President Donald Trump "to immediately release this important study."

"Families who have been exposed to emerging contaminants in their drinking water have a right to know about any health impacts, and keeping such information from the public threatens the safety, health, and vitality of communities across our country," Hassan said, citing POLITICO's reporting of the issue. Details of the internal discussions emerged from EPA emails released to the Union of Concerned Scientists under the Freedom of Information Act.

Sen. Jeanne Shaheen, a fellow New Hampshire Democrat, called the delay "an egregious example of politics interfering with the public's right to know. ... [I]t's unconscionable that even the existence of this study has been withheld until now."

The emails portray a "brazenly political" response to the contamination crisis, said Judith Enck, a former EPA official who dealt with the same pollutants during the Obama administration — saying it goes far beyond a normal debate among scientists.

"Scientists always debate each other, but under the law, ATSDR is the agency that's supposed to make health recommendations," she said.

The White House referred questions about the issue to HHS, which confirmed that the study has no scheduled release date.

Pruitt's chief of staff, Ryan Jackson, defended EPA's actions, telling POLITICO the agency was helping "ensure that the federal government is responding in a uniform way to our local, state, and Congressional constituents and partners."

Still, Pruitt has faced steady criticism for his handling of science at the agency, even before the recent spate of ethics investigations into his upscale travels and dealings with lobbyists. In his year leading EPA, he has overhauled several scientific advisory panels to include more industry representatives and recently ordered limits on the kinds of scientific studies the agency will consider on the health effects of pollution.

On the other hand, Pruitt has also called water pollution one of his signature priorities.

The chemicals at issue in the HHS study have long been used in products like Teflon and firefighting foam, and are contaminating water systems around the country. Known as PFOA and PFOS, they have been linked with thyroid defects, problems in pregnancy and certain cancers, even at low levels of exposure.

The problem has already proven to be enormously costly for chemicals manufacturers. The 3M Co., which used them to make Scotchguard, paid more than \$1.5 billion to settle lawsuits related to water contamination and personal injury claims.

But some of the biggest liabilities reside with the Defense Department, which used foam containing the chemicals in exercises at bases across the country. In a March report to Congress, the Defense Department listed 126 facilities where tests of nearby water supplies showed the substances exceeded the current safety guidelines.

A government study concluding that the chemicals are more dangerous than previously thought could dramatically increase the cost of cleanups at sites like military bases and chemical manufacturing plants, and force neighboring communities to pour money into treating their drinking water supplies.

The discussions about how to address the HHS study involved Pruitt's chief of staff and other top aides, including a chemical industry official who now oversees EPA's chemical safety office.

Herz, the OMB staffer, forwarded the email warning about the study's "extremely painful" consequences to EPA's top financial officer on Jan. 30. Later that day, Nancy Beck, deputy assistant administrator for EPA's Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention, suggested elevating the study to OMB's Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs to coordinate an interagency review. Beck, who worked as a toxicologist in that office for 10 years, suggested it would be a "good neutral arbiter" of the dispute.

"OMB/OIRA played this role quite a bit under the Bush Administration, but under Obama they just let each agency do their own thing...", Beck wrote in one email that was released to UCS.

Beck, who started at OMB in 2002, worked on a similar issue involving perchlorate, an ingredient in rocket fuel — linked with thyroid problems and other ailments — that has leached from defense facilities and manufacturing sites into the drinking water of at least 20 million Americans. Beck stayed on at OMB into the Obama administration, leaving the office in January 2012 and going to work for the American Chemistry Council, where she was senior director for regulatory science policy until joining EPA last year.

Yogin Kothari, a lobbyist with the Union of Concerned Scientists, called Beck's January email "extremely troubling because it appears as though the White House is trying to interfere in a science-based risk assessment."

Environmentalists say such interference was routine during the Bush administration.

"It's why the Obama administration issued a call for scientific integrity policies across the federal government," Kothari said in an email to POLITICO. "Dr. Beck should know firsthand that the Bush administration sidelined science at every turn, given that she spent time at OMB during that time."

Soon after the Trump White House raised concerns about the impending study, EPA chief of staff Ryan Jackson reached out to his HHS counterpart, as well as senior officials in charge of the agency overseeing the assessment to discuss coordinating work among HHS, EPA and the Pentagon. Jackson confirmed the outreach last week, saying it is important for the government to speak with a single voice on such a serious issue.

"EPA is eager to participate in and, contribute to a coordinated approach so each federal stakeholder is fully informed on what the other stakeholders' concerns, roles, and expertise can contribute and to ensure that the federal government is responding in a uniform way to our local, state, and Congressional constituents and partners," Jackson told POLITICO via email.

Pruitt has made addressing per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, or PFAS, a priority for EPA. The unpublished HHS study focused on two specific chemicals from this class, PFOA and PFOS.

States have been pleading with EPA for help, and experts say that contamination is so widespread, the chemicals are found in nearly every water supply that gets tested.

In December, the Trump administration's nominee to head the agency's chemical safety office, industry consultant Michael Dourson, withdrew his nomination after North Carolina's Republican senators said they would not support him, in large part because of their state's struggles with PFAS contamination. Dourson's previous research on the subject has been criticized as too favorable to the chemical industry.

Shortly after Dourson's nomination was dropped, Pruitt announced a "leadership summit" with states to discuss the issue scheduled for next week.

In 2016, the agency published a voluntary health advisory for PFOA and PFOS, warning that exposure to the chemicals at levels above 70 parts per trillion, total, could be dangerous. One part per trillion is roughly the equivalent of a single grain of sand in an Olympic-sized swimming pool.

The updated HHS assessment was poised to find that exposure to the chemicals at less than one-sixth of that level could be dangerous for sensitive populations like infants and breastfeeding mothers, according to the emails.

Dave Andrews, a senior scientist with the Environmental Working Group, said those conclusions line up with recent studies on the health effects of PFAS.

"They are looking at very subtle effects like increased risk of obesity for children exposed in womb, lowered immune response, and childhood vaccines becoming not as effective," Andrews said.

The HHS document at issue is called a toxicological profile, which describes the dangers of a chemical based on a review of previous scientific studies. It would carry no regulatory weight itself, but could factor into cleanup requirements at Superfund sites.

EPA scientists, including career staffers, were already talking with the HHS researchers about the differences in their two approaches to evaluating the chemicals when officials at the White House raised alarm in late January, the emails show. Those differences, according to the correspondence, stemmed from the agencies' use of different scientific studies as a basis, and from taking different approaches to accounting for the harm that the chemicals can do to the immune system — an area of research that has burgeoned in the two years since EPA issued its health advisory.

Enck, the former EPA official, said she sees one troubling gap in the emails: They make "no mention of the people who are exposed to PFOA or PFOS, there's no health concern expressed here."

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Trump administration finally issues report on toxic chemicals [Back](#)

By Annie Snider | 06/20/2018 01:21 PM EDT

The Trump administration finally released a delayed report on toxic water contamination on Wednesday, months after White House officials expressed fears it would spark a "public relations nightmare" if released.

As expected, the report by the Department of Health and Human Services shows that toxic nonstick chemicals that have leaked into communities' drinking water supplies endanger human health at levels the EPA had previously deemed safe.

[POLITICO](#) first reported last month on the delay in publishing the report, which followed an intervention by White House and EPA officials, including EPA Chief of Staff Ryan Jackson.

The 852-page scientific draft [assessment](#) of so-called PFAS chemicals, posted Wednesday by the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, details how people are exposed to the chemicals and the health risks the chemicals pose to populations ranging from infants and breastfeeding mothers to adult males. It finds that the chemicals can pose risks to the most vulnerable populations at levels lower than those EPA had deemed safe in its 2016 health advisory for two of the chemicals, known as PFOA and PFOS.

The chemicals at issue in the HHS study have long been used in products such as Teflon and firefighting foam, and are contaminating water systems around the country. They have been linked to thyroid defects, pregnancy problems and certain cancers, even at low levels of exposure.

The problem has already proved to be enormously costly for chemicals manufacturers. The 3M Co., which used them to make Scotchgard, paid more than \$1.5 billion to settle lawsuits related to water contamination and personal injury claims.

EPA will hold its first community meeting on PFAS in New Hampshire next week.

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EPA seeks to build public trust on chemicals [Back](#)

By Annie Snider | 06/25/2018 05:02 AM EDT

New England residents affected by toxic water contamination will press EPA to live up to Administrator Scott Pruitt's pledge to address the cancer-causing pollutants Monday afternoon at the agency's first community meeting on the issue.

EPA officials can expect to be met with anger and frustration at the meeting in New Hampshire, where contamination from nonstick chemicals called PFAS has affected thousands of people and emerged a campaign issue in one of the most competitive congressional races in the country.

Communities across the country whose water has been tainted with high levels of PFAS were outraged after POLITICO [reported](#) last month that top Trump administration officials sought to block an HHS report that found some PFAS chemicals can pose a danger at one-tenth of the level EPA has set as the safety threshold. Within hours of the report, New Hampshire's entire congressional delegation had written Pruitt and HHS Secretary Alex Azar to call for the report's release. It was ultimately made [public](#) last week.

"The way the administration is undermining science and evidence and facts has made this [contamination] more and more of an issue," said state Rep. Mindi Messmer, an environmental expert who has worked extensively on PFAS issues and is one of nine Democrats running for the open seat in New Hampshire's 1st District. That district, which was represented by Democrat [Carol Shea-Porter](#), narrowly backed Donald Trump in 2016 and is one of Republicans' top targets to flip this fall.

Anger at EPA grew when the agency refused to allow the people affected by the contamination to attend a "leadership summit" on the chemicals with state and federal officials last month after news broke about the stalled report. Under pressure, Pruitt ultimately extended a last minute invitation for the first day of the two-day summit to one community advocate, Andrea Amico of the New Hampshire group Testing for Pease.

"The fact that communities were not welcome at that meeting has left people feeling incredibly disheartened. You cannot come up with solutions to problems and not include the very people that have to deal with the problems," Amico said.

At that summit, Pruitt announced EPA would take a handful of near-term actions on the chemicals crisis, including deciding whether two of the best-known PFAS chemicals should be regulated under the Safe Drinking Water Act and also whether they should be designated as hazardous substances for the purposes of Superfund cleanups.

New Hampshire is a fitting location for EPA's first effort to repair relations with the residents who are most affected by PFAS contamination, since the state is grappling with a wide range of problems from the chemical. A former Portsmouth military site where firefighting foam containing the substances was used has been redeveloped into a massive industrial park, exposing thousands of people, including children, to the chemicals through drinking water.

To the west, the chemicals were used at a manufacturing site and eventually made it to the groundwater, contaminating hundreds of residential wells. And in the state's south, a former landfill that has been designated as a Superfund site is leaching PFAS chemicals into the groundwater near communities that have developed two pediatric cancer clusters.

The state has moved aggressively to address the chemicals problem, conducting extensive water testing and using emergency powers to set its own groundwater standard after EPA released its health advisory for two

PFAS chemicals in May 2016. But New Hampshire has a limited ability to parse the science on its own, and its Department of Environmental Services does not have a toxicologist or a risk assessor on staff.

Other states have moved to set their own limits for the chemicals at more stringent levels than EPA has recommended. New Hampshire's neighbor Vermont has set its limit at 20 parts per trillion of PFOA and PFOS, less than a third of the safety limit recommended in EPA's health advisory.

"We count on [the federal government] being able to go out and provide us research and advisories as to the impacts of various compounds and how to detect them, how to determine what a healthy or unhealthy level is and how to remediate where they're found," said Clark Freise, Assistant Commissioner of the state's Department of Environmental Services.

Recognizing the challenge, the state legislature passed legislation this session to hire two new experts at the Department of Environmental Services, and the state's Republican governor is expected to sign the bills soon.

In the meantime, the agency is hiring an outside expert to help the state make sense of the recently-released HHS report that recommended stricter safety levels than the two-year-old EPA health advisory.

New Hampshire residents say their situation is a testament to the need for strong federal leadership. And while Pruitt has vowed to provide it, they say the jury is still out.

Political officials in Washington have proven to be fickle partners for the communities. Jillian Lane, a resident of Greenland, N.H., one of the communities home to the pediatric cancer clusters near the Superfund site, visited Washington this spring for a meeting with Albert "Kell" Kelly, who was Pruitt's Superfund adviser at the time. Within days of Lane's meeting, Kelley had resigned from EPA amid questions about actions he took in his previous job as the head of an Oklahoma bank that led to a lifetime ban from banking from federal regulators.

"I had taken three days out of my life away from my family, it wasn't easy, and I left with this optimistic feeling that we're going to have the attention of EPA headquarters, and then suddenly that went away," Lane said.

"It was like a gut punch," she said.

Lane and other community advocates say they've found a much more reliable partner in EPA Regional Administrator Alexandra Dunn, who will be the top political official on hand at this week's meeting. After Kelly resigned in May, Dunn stepped in to make sure the New Hampshire community continued to receive attention, and even traveled from Boston to talk with residents at Lane's home.

"That has been very encouraging," Lane said.

Now the question, advocates say, is whether that will translate into action from the EPA in Washington that has close ties to the chemicals industry, having hired a top chemicals industry expert to lead its chemical safety office. EPA has also repeatedly taken industry-friendly interpretations of a new toxic chemicals law.

Amico, the New Hampshire activist who attended the leadership summit in Washington, said she urged EPA to keep its focus on the people at the center of the crisis when she met Pruitt ahead of the meeting.

"At the end of the day, this isn't about industry, this isn't about [the Defense Department] and all the consequence they have for these chemical; this is about helping communities that have to live with these high levels in their bodies and have to drink contaminated water for a very long time," she said.

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Perry to meet with Russia energy minister next week [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon and Ben Lefebvre | 06/22/2018 02:13 PM EDT

Energy Secretary Rick Perry is slated to meet next Tuesday with Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak, just days after Russia joined with OPEC to raise oil exports, according to two sources familiar with the matter.

State Department spokesman Vince Campos confirmed the meeting, saying, "State is in regular contact with DOE on international energy matters."

Details on what the two would discuss at the meeting were not disclosed. But Russia has been moving closer to OPEC in recent years, and joined the cartel's effort to curb oil sales that pushed crude prices to 3-1/2 year highs last month. OPEC and Russia's Novak announced on Friday they would lift oil their exports cap by 1 million barrels per day in the second half of the year.

The Wall Street Journal first reported the meeting earlier today.

Perry is scheduled to deliver a keynote address at the World Gas Conference in Washington the same day. The meeting with Novak is likely to draw scrutiny, as President Donald Trump's administration has come under fire for its ties to Russia, and the White House may be close to finalizing plans for a [July meeting](#) between Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The surge of U.S. oil and gas exports in recent years has made the country a rival of Russia's in the global energy markets. Perry has touted U.S. LNG shipments to Europe, which would [compete](#) against the planned Nord Stream II gas pipeline, while U.S. crude oil exports are also [eating into Russia's market share](#) in Asia.

WHAT'S NEXT: Perry will deliver the keynote at the World Gas Conference

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Pruitt faces another probe for employee retaliation allegations [Back](#)

By Emily Holden | 06/24/2018 06:26 PM EDT

The U.S. Office of Special Counsel is reviewing claims that Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt retaliated against a handful of employees who pushed back against his spending and management, according to three people familiar with the process.

At least six current and former agency officials were reportedly fired or reassigned to new jobs, allegedly for questioning Pruitt's need for a 24-hour security protection — which has now cost at least [\\$4.6 million](#) — as well as his other spending and practices. OSC is in the process of interviewing some of those employees, according to the sources, although an OSC spokesman said the agency cannot comment on or confirm any open investigations.

The previously unreported review by OSC adds to the roughly dozen other inquiries into Pruitt for seeking job opportunities for his wife, using aides to do personal tasks for him, and receiving sweetheart deals on a condo rental and exclusive sporting event seats from a lobbyist and a coal industry executive. Congressional Democrats have also requested an FBI investigation into potential criminal offenses.

OSC investigations typically center on federal employee complaints, and the agency primarily handles allegations of retaliation against staffers for whistleblower complaints and for refusing to obey orders that might require employees to violate a law. It also reviews potential violations of the Hatch Act, which prohibits federal employees from engaging in certain political activities.

The OSC, which is independent, has the authority to require corrective action, like restoring an employee's position or providing back pay, and can also prosecute if complaints are found to be legitimate.

An EPA spokesperson said the agency does not comment on OSC matters.

Four EPA employees were moved to new jobs or took temporary leave to work at universities after questioning Pruitt, the New York Times reported. They include career deputy chiefs of staff John E. Reeder and Reginald E. Allen and security agents Eric Weese and John C. Martin. Two other employees were fired. One, Mario Caraballo, deputy associate administrator of the Office of Homeland Security, was dismissed after editing a report suggesting the recorded threats against Pruitt didn't justify his large-scale security operation. EPA has said he was let go for other reasons.

The other, Kevin Chmielewski, was a political aide and chief of staff for operations, who has outspokenly criticized Pruitt's leadership in interviews with lawmakers and the press.

One person who lodged a complaint said the employees' concerns should be taken seriously.

"These are highly educated, professional people who don't complain. They do their job, they do it well and they're tired of being abused by career employees who enable [Chief of Staff] Ryan Jackson and Scott Pruitt to get away with what they're doing," the person said.

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In Nevada, Trump goes after 'Wacky Jacky' [Back](#)

By Brent D. Griffiths | 06/23/2018 05:54 PM EDT

President Donald Trump tried to give a boost to Sen. Dean Heller in Las Vegas on Saturday, dubbing his opponent "Wacky Jacky" while brushing past the immigration controversy that has overwhelmed his presidency in recent days.

"You don't want her as your senator," Trump said of Heller's opponent, Democrat Rep. Jacky Rosen, at Nevada Republicans' state convention. "Now, that name didn't come from me. That's a name that people have known because people that know her, that's what they call her, Wacky Jacky, that's what you want for your senator?"

Trump largely eschewed talk of his administration's zero tolerance policy on immigration that sparked an international outcry. While visiting the southwestern state where roughly 29 percent of the population is Hispanic or Latino, Trump stressed that America could not afford to be weak on immigration.

After initially defending the policy that led to the separation of hundreds of migrant families, Trump signed an executive order on Wednesday that sought to at least temporarily end the practice of forcibly removing children from parents who illegally crossed the border.

But the vaguely worded order leaves many open questions, including just how exactly the administration will unite the over 2,300 children who have already been separated from their parents.

Former Trump campaign manager Corey Lewandowski joined the president for the trip, just days after he responded "womp womp" to a fellow Fox News panelist who brought up the case of a 10-year-old girl with Down Syndrome who had been separated from her mother.

The president's trip to Nevada comes as Heller, who joined Trump on Saturday for a roundtable discussion on the Republican Party's tax law, is widely viewed as one of the most endangered GOP incumbents on the ballot this November.

According to local media reports, hundreds gathered outside the Suncoast Hotel & Casino to protest the president and his immigration policies before he arrived.

Trump chided Heller on Saturday for "initially being shaky" during the presidential campaign — the senator told reporters in October 2016 he was 99 percent sure he would not support his party's presidential nominee — but said the senator is now "rock solid."

Heller looked like he was in for a possibly bruising primary campaign against Danny Tarkanian, the son of the legendary UNLV basketball coach and a frequent candidate, but Trump leaned on Tarkanian and convinced him to seek a U.S. House seat instead, clearing the way for Heller.

After initially taking a hard line over Senate leadership-led efforts to repeal Obamacare, Heller voted in favor of a procedural measure to open debate to consider plans to repeal the law. After the GOP stalled on a replacement plan, Heller supported a slimmed down alternative, known as "skinny repeal," that failed in dramatic fashion when Republicans Sens. John McCain, Lisa Murkowski and Susan Collins broke with their party, dooming the proposal. Heller also supported the GOP's rewrite of the tax code.

Trump still appeared miffed that McCain's vote thwarted a much larger repeal of President Barack Obama's signature domestic achievement. While not mentioning him by name, Trump said on Saturday that "nobody knew he was going to do that."

"He campaigned on repeal and replace ... for years," Trump said of the Arizona senator who remains away from Washington as he continues to battle brain cancer.

Along with dubbing Rosen "wacky," the president returned to his favorite harangue of Massachusetts Democrat Sen. Elizabeth Warren, a possible 2020 opponent, as "Pocahontas," after mentioning reports that Warren was also in the state campaigning.

Trump concluded by framing the race in very stark terms, arguing that a vote for Rosen was not just support for Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, but also an endorsement of lawlessness.

"But a vote for her is a vote for increased taxes. Weak borders. It is really a vote for crime," the president said.

Responding to the president's attacks later, Rosen called the insult "petty" and said Trump is only campaigning in the state because Heller has capitulated to him.

"The President is attacking me with lies and petty insults because I'm not afraid to stand up to him," Rosen said in a statement. "This was Senator Heller's reward for his loyalty."

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Heitkamp releases new ad touting effectiveness [Back](#)

By James Arkin | 06/22/2018 10:48 AM EDT

Sen. [Heidi Heitkamp](#) (D-N.D.) released a new statewide TV ad Friday touting her record as an "effective" senator.

"Why is Heidi in the top ten list of most effective senators?" a narrator asks, referencing rankings last year from the Center for Effective Lawmaking.

"She passed drought relief, ended the 40-year oil export ban, rolled back EPA wetland rules, cut regulations on rural lending, protected our long range strike bombers, passed the border security act and shut down human trafficking websites," the narrator says.

"She's a force for rural America who's stronger than battery acid," the narrator says, referencing a quote from Republican Sen. [Bob Corker](#). It's the second time Heitkamp has used the quote in a TV ad.

Heitkamp's campaign is backing the ad with a six figure statewide TV buy, and a five-figure digital buy. Watch it [here](#).

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